

Jul 23, 2016

Genesis 22:1-19

The Genesis of God's People: God Tests Our Faith

Jonathan M. Romig

CornerstoneWestford.com

Introduction: (Slide #1)

1. In the story of Abraham and Isaac, God asks Abraham to do the unthinkable, to sacrifice his son, Isaac.
2. You can imagine the waves of fear rolling over Abraham, a throb in his gut, the sweat on his brow.
3. You can imagine him going into his tent and looking at his sleeping son, and praying for mercy.
4. We have the benefit of knowing God was testing Abraham, but he didn't know what God was doing.
5. Have you ever walked through a time in your life when you didn't know what God was doing?
6. You feel like maybe God is testing you, or Satan is tempting you, or the situation is just your fault.
7. What are you going through that makes you ask that same question (health scare, money, job, school)?
8. In today's message we're going to look at one simple truth... **God tests us to give us deep faith. (S2)**

(William Trubridge of New Zealand knows what it means to dive deep.)

(Earlier this year he attempted the deepest unassisted to 121 meters, 397 feet deep.)

(He trained and tested himself so he could dive into deep darkness and crushing pressure.)

(God tests us to give us deep faith... He takes us into darkness and crushing pressure to refine us.)

I. God tests us by asking us to give Him what matters most. (Gen 22:1-2) (S3)

A. God tested Abraham by telling him to give him Isaac.

1. God drills directly to the heart, from general to specific (your son, only son, your love, Isaac).
2. God promised Abraham that he would have a son through his wife Sarah (Gen 17:19).
3. It is through this son, Isaac, that he would have a great multitude of children (Gen 21:12).
4. He's calling him to do a terrible thing, burn his son and burn the promise (LXX: holokarposis).
5. God is not only targeting what Abraham loves most (Isaac), but what he values most (legacy).

B. What are you clinging onto because it's what you love most or value most?

1. If you're younger, maybe it's your dream girl or dream boy, but they're not God's pick for you.
2. If you're a little older, maybe it's your safety and security, or a family member, a child.
3. It could also be your dreams; God gives us dreams, but we hold them with open palms.
4. God doesn't always ask us to do scary things, but would you if he asked?
5. If he asked you to go on a missions trip, adopt, or talk to your friend about Jesus, would you?
6. This week I was reviewing how much I give as part of my tithe... does God own your money?
7. God already asks us to give him a portion of our money, are we doing that?

(God tests us by asking us to give Him what matters most.)

(God tests us to give us deep faith.)

II. We pass the test by faith and obedience. (Gen 22:3-5) (S4)

A. We pass the test by obedience. (v. 3)

1. Abraham got up early the next morning and left—he has practiced obeying quickly.
2. When God told him to get circumcised, Gen 18:23 says he was circumcised “on that very day.”

3. When I was in Colorado, I my friends Clint and his wife taught their son how to obey.
4. They taught him this phrase, “Slow obedience is disobedience.” (S5)
5. When God asks us to do something, he wants us to obey, not procrastinate.

(But just obeying isn’t enough... the desire to obey has to come from somewhere inside us.)
 (Before we can obey, we need something even greater, belief.)

B. We pass the test by faith. (v. 5) (S6)

1. When they arrive at the mountain, Abraham leaves his servants, notice what he says.
2. He knows he is about to kill Isaac, but he says, “we will come back to you.”
3. God had specifically promised that Abraham would have a great people through Isaac.
4. Abraham knows God can’t lie so he believes God will raise him from the dead.

(S7) Hebrews 11:17-19 17 **By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.** He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 19 **Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead,** and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. (NIV®)

C. The free-diver William Trubridge retells an anecdote about Russian gymnast trainers.

1. He says the Russian trainers screened children to become gymnasts.
2. One by one they asked each on to jump off the highest diving board at the pool.
3. The ones that jumped were selected for the program.
4. What mattered most to the trainers was not ability or strength, but obedience.
5. Outwardly, we can all look like good Christians with lots of ability, but do we obey?
6. If God asked you to jump off the highest diving board at the pool, would you?

(We pass the test by faith and obedience.)
 (God tests us to give us deep faith.)

III. We’re supposed to believe even when it’s difficult. (Gen 22:6-8) (S8)

- A. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb is and Abraham’s only answer is... “God will provide.”
1. Isaac is a young man, maybe a teenager, and he’s asking his father a reasonable question.
 2. But Abraham’s answer is unreasonable, it defies logic, it’s escapist, it’s silly.
 3. I imagine Isaac asks not because he’s dumb, but because he’s intuitive.
 4. See how he doesn’t run away, he keeps going, trusting his father and trusting God.

- B. When I was in Colorado, my childhood friend Rachel died.
1. She was 28 years old, had three little girls, a Godly husband, and she is now gone from cancer.
 2. I know her family trusts Jesus, but there’s no human reason why what has happened is okay.
 3. Maybe in 10 years, we’ll be able to see positive ways God has worked, but that’s not enough.
 4. God is calling on that family to believe and trust him even when it doesn’t make sense.
 5. One day God may give you the opportunity to believe when it’s hard.

(We’re supposed to believe even when it’s difficult.)
 (God tests us to give us deep faith.)

IV. God promises to provide what we truly need. (Gen 22:9-14) **(S9)**

- A. God spares Abraham's son Isaac at the last possible moment.
1. He climbs the mountain, builds an altar, puts the wood on it, binds his son, and lays him on it.
 2. Every step of the way I bet Abraham and Isaac were waiting for God to speak, silence.
 3. Abraham draws back the knife like a golf swing or baseball bat, almost impossible to stop.
 4. At the very last moment, an angel shouts, "Abraham! Abraham!"
 5. "Do not lay a hand on the boy... Now I know that you fear God." (substitutionary ram)
 6. God gave Abraham two things: 1) the life of his son, 2) faith enough to obey.

(Do you believe that God will ultimately give you what you really need?)

(Part of giving God our all is trusting that he'll give us what we truly need.)

- B. The free-diver William Trubridge broke the world record, diving 122 meters, 400 feet.
1. By the way, he was the previous record holder, and he's broken it since, to 124 meters, 407 feet.
 2. **(S10)** He wrote a poem that says this, "*I have a relationship with the depths, they beckon me beyond my means, cold dark vacant pressure, forever night, endless dreams.*"
 3. Do you have a relationship with God?
 4. He beckons us beyond our means, to cold dark vacant pressure.
 5. But he promises it will not be forever night or endless dreams; he will provide all we need.
 6. One day God will reward all who dive deep into him with eternal stability and joy.

(God promises to provide what we truly need.)

(God tests us to give us deep faith.)

V. God rewards true faith. (Gen 22:15-19) **(S11)**

- A. God re-affirms his covenant promise with Abraham as a reward for his faith.
1. In Genesis 12, God promised to multiply Abraham into a great people.
 2. In Genesis 15, God ratifies that promise by making an unconditional covenant of grace.
 3. A covenant is "a promise where God is involved."
 4. In Genesis 17, God gives a sign of the covenant to Abraham and his family, circumcision.
 5. And in Genesis 22, God rewards Abraham for believing God will keep his promises.
 6. When we truly trust God, we can't begin to imagine the rewards God will give us.
 7. In this life, you'll experience his goodness despite circumstances, and in the next, eternal life.

(God rewards true faith.)

(God tests us to give us deep faith.)

(God uses Abraham's faith to do something greater than he could ever imagine...)

(By following God, it's like he is at a painting party, painting a beautiful copy of a masterpiece.)

VI. The story of Isaac and Abraham is the story of Jesus and the Father. **(S12)**

- A. The sacrifice of Isaac points forward to the sacrifice of Jesus.
1. Isaac went to mount Moriah as a sacrifice. (future: temple mount in Jerusalem)

- a) **Jesus** went to mount Golgotha as the sacrifice. (just outside Jerusalem)
2. Isaac walked for three days towards a grave.
 - a) **Jesus** spent three days in the grave.
3. Isaac expressed fear and trepidation to his father Abraham.
 - a) In the Garden of Gethsemane **Jesus** expressed fear and trepidation to the Father.
 - b) He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” (Matt 26:39a)
4. Isaac obeyed his father Abraham even when it seemed dangerous.
 - a) **Jesus** obeyed his Father, even till the end, praying, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (v.39b)
5. Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering up the mountain.
 - a) **Jesus** carried the wood for his offering, the cross, until he could carry it no more.
6. Isaac let his father bind him as a silent sacrifice.
 - a) **Jesus** was accused but didn’t open his mouth; he made no reply (Isa 53:7, Matt 27:14).
7. Isaac was bound to an altar, Abraham’s knife blade set to cut.
 - a) **Jesus** was nailed to a wooden altar, cut away from God, forsaken.
8. Isaac was an imperfect sacrifice, and so he was spared, a ram becoming his substitute.
 - a) **Jesus** was the perfect sacrifice, and he was not spared, becoming a perfect substitute for us.
9. Abraham is the father who gave up his son to God.
 - a) God is the Father who gave up His son for you and me. (opportunity to believe, gospel)

(The story of Isaac and Abraham is the story of Jesus and the Father.)

(God tests us to give us deep faith.) **(S13)**

Conclusion:

1. There’s a new musical on Broadway called Hamilton and it’s all the rage; Monica has the soundtrack.
2. The musical is based on the real life of Alexander Hamilton, who had a son named Philip.
3. Philip get’s into a duel to protect his father’s honor but Hamilton tells him to spare the other man’s life.
4. He says, “When the time comes, fire your weapon in the air; this will put an end to the whole affair.”
5. On the count of seven, Philip aims for the sky, and the other man shoots him.
6. Philip dies and the other man lives because Philip trusted his father at the cost of his own life.
7. We have a father in heaven who sacrificed his son so that you and I would be spared.
8. God created a test that none of us could ever pass... and then entered into it for us.
9. When God seems to be testing you and you don’t understand... remember God’s been there.

God tests us to give us deep faith.

Psalm 121:7–8 The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. (NIV®)